

NEWS from

The Savannah River Site



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For Immediate Release

NEW DWPF MELTER BEGINS OPERATIONS

AIKEN, S.C., (March 31, 2003) – The Savannah River Site's Defense Waste Processing Facility has begun radioactive operations with its second melter, which was installed during a successful six-month outage.

The 65-ton melter, the heart of DWPF operations, was installed in January, and has been since undergoing startup tests and a gradual heat-up. All operations were conducted remotely to protect workers from radiation. The new melter began pouring radioactive glass Saturday morning, March 29. The first canister was completed Sunday.

The outage was completed three weeks ahead of schedule, says DWPF Facility Manager Jeff Barnes. "We made the most out of this outage," he says. "We performed a great deal of work that would otherwise have required an additional outage in the future. That takes time off the schedule and saves taxpayers money."

One major task that was completed in this outage, rather than in a future one, was to replace the facility's control room equipment with a more modern Distributed Control System. The previous system was 1980s vintage, and replacement parts were no longer available.

Other obsolete equipment was also replaced in this outage, improving the facility's health and making it more viable for its long-term operations.

DWPF's first melter operated continuously for more than eight years, including six years of radioactive operations – more than three times its design life. It produced more than 1,300 waste glass canisters, about 27 percent of the projected total canisters for DWPF.

The plan was to operate the first melter as long as possible, giving engineers a chance to observe how it can falter in its later life and what to look for in future melter operation.

By safely extending the original melter's useful life, SRS has saved millions in taxpayer dollars and stays on course to empty waste tanks. Melters cost about \$20 million each.

The site is owned by the U.S. Department of Energy and operated by a team of contractors led by the Westinghouse Savannah River Company.

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